2: Lorimer T-3 (1929-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

Chapter 17

LAND AND HOUSES IN HUNZA

● 423 By far the majority of the peasant families in Hunza are free-holders. The land passes from generation to generation without tax during life or duty after death. In olden days the Mirs owned a certain amount of land in every settlement, and the custom was to have this farmed by forced labour, spread, in theory, justly over the villagers. The Yerpa, or Steward, in charge of such royal demesnes, was obviously in the pleasant position of being able on the one side to cheat his royal master of a large proportion of the produce, and on the other to oppress and squeeze the luckless peasant-labourers. He extorted bribes in kind from anyone able thus to evade the communal work, and he could impose more than a fair share of the labour on anyone who incurred his dislike. When the present Mir (Sir Muhammad Nazim Khán)[1] was a boy he had seen this system at its ugly work under his father, Mir Ghazan Khan, and his elder brother, Mir Safdar Ali, and as he would tell you with a smile: "I knew just how much peculation and bribery went on—had I not acted as Yerpa myself!"

643 To secure the throne for himself, Safdar Ali, as may be
648 remembered, murdered his father and several brothers in traditional Karakoram style, and ultimately fell foul of the British Government of India by breaking promises and treaties and trying to play off the Chinese and Russian Governments against the Indian. After the brilliant little frontier campaign of 1891–92 he fled—unregretted—to Central Asia, leaving vacant the throne of his ancestors. The British had no wish to annex the country, but it was highly important for the security

[1] Now, alas! the late Mir.—E. O. L., 1938.

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

681 ment. A few years' exile in Shimshál is incomparably preferable to three years' penal servitude in Wormwood Scrubs, yet Hunza delinquents do not become recidivists.

643 Young Muhammad Narím Khán took up his job deter-
•423 mined, in the light of his travels and experience, to alter much that had been traditional under his ancestors, and within three years of his accession he had completely abolished the Yerpa system of cultivating the royal lands. Such as lay immediately under his own eye he retained, but all the rest are leased out on easy terms to tenants. For the first years a tenant pays no rent at all for new ground that he brings under the plough; he has to get his fields carved out, his water-channels made, and the soil worked. After the land begins to bear he pays a small fixed rent in kind, and if at any point he finds the bargain unprofitable he is free to resign his holding. A large part of the "new settlements" of Aliábád, including all the district immediately round our house, was *kurákal* land (viz. royal land leased out), and there was no question that the system was working to everyone's satisfaction. The extra fields available had been eagerly taken up by families in the older settlements who were finding their freehold land too cramped, and many of our neighbours were sons who had hived off from the family freehold and whose relations were still living in Báltít, Haidarábád, or Dorkhan.

556 We once enquired, *à propos* of the meaning of the words
842 "rich" and "poor": "Now what would you people consider a rich man?" "One who had, say, a hundred animals." (The ordinary peasant household has twenty or so sheep, goats, and cows.) "And is there any rich man in Aliábád?" "Only one, the Yerpa." This struck us as highly significant; the one rich man still bore by courtesy his grandfather's title of "Steward"! He was no doubt still enjoying his grandfather's ill-gotten gains. Our Yerpa was, in fact, a genial, kindly man, reputed generous. He was not envied: "Poor chap, he has no sons; he has to hire herd-boys to mind his flocks, and labourers to work his fields." In Hunza a man's true wealth is in his sons; they work the farm with him; if there are several, some can go abroad and earn. Not that a woman or a woman's work is

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-8) 1939 AV7 Burushō AV7

belonging to a family in which Prince Ghazan Khán had been fostered, and who had thus acquired the extra land, etc., which is the recognized recompense for fostering royalty. We supposed that it was a desire to live up to this distinguished new connection (possibly it was a stipulation of the bride's people) that prompted his intention to set the young son, Kamber, up in a house of his own instead of bringing the new wife to share the parents' home.

Whatever lay behind this departure from custom, Nadiro sent his Hérul Nisa one day to tell me that he was setting out to "smite his poplars" if I would care to come. It was a *very* hot morning and I was deep in something else, but of course you'd never see anything if you weren't ready to take chances as they turn up. So I shouldered my camera and tripod, seized my long walking-stick (which is a great aid to climbing walls or leaping down them), on which I had made notches every foot to serve for measuring distances, and set off with Hérul Nisa. "Where is father's poplar garden?" I asked. The Aliábád people have a bewildering way of possessing odd scraps of ground dotted about all over the place, just according as they have taken up one plot or another of the sometime royal land. "Oh, quite near," she said. Everything is "quite near" to these active people, who think less of a 500-foot climb than we think of running a hundred yards to the pillar-box at the corner. It was, in fact, a hot, vertical half-mile over the roughest ground without even a track. Here on a rugged patch of stony, steep-sloping ground, carefully walled in, I found the whole of No. 8 and several neighbours busily setting about the felling job. One man scrambled up and attached a rope near the top of the fated tree. Two or three laid hold of the rope and stood at some distance to pull in the right direction, while the old Ustád himself skilfully hacked a triangular bite out of the trunk near to the ground and then axed away. It was only a few minutes till the slender poplar crashed down. Then Kamber and his friends hacked off the few remaining uppermost branches—the lower ones had been cut long ago—and the womenfolk and young people all clustered along the trunk to peel off the bark, taking care to get it off in strips as long

WINTER AND THE "GREAT COLD"

The old simpleton thereupon revealed to her that while he was invulnerable to spear or arrow, axe or sword, his heart was made of butter and he could be destroyed by fire. 773 796

The conspirators thereupon, working privily by night, dug a trench close under the walls of the King's fort and filled it with dry wood, and on a given night at a given signal every Gilgit household poured forth its menfolk armed with blazing torches which they flung into the trench with a great cry: "The enemy is upon you!" The butter-hearted tyrant ran forth and perished miserably in the circle of fierce heat, and the Prince and Princess reigned in his stead.

While Gilgit itself has long since ceased to celebrate its deliverance, the Tumushelling Bonfire in Hunza keeps aflame the memory of Shiri Badat and his heart of butter. In olden days it seems that every Hunza household let its fire die out and rekindled the hearth by a brand from the Tumushelling Fire, but this practice had lapsed before any of our informants could remember.

One winter day, after a gruelling forenoon of solid hard note-taking, DL said: "I'm just about half dead. We must take a quiet walk this afternoon. We'll go up to the Mir's Stables; we can't meet anyone up there. I positively could not talk or listen any more." 423 311

The "Mir's Stables" bear no relation to a stable as we understand it. Above the line of terraced fields that sweep round the bay of Aliábád there are 200 or 300 feet of sloping mountain side, forming rude pasture grounds: the *toqs*. Above them rise the steep sand and rock slopes that flow down from the towering crags above. A little farther down the valley from us there is a kind of shelf above the *toqs*, a small roughly level plateau, scattered thick with huge boulders, which is called the "Mir's Stables." It isn't irrigated from any channel; it lies above the highest one, which in any case has petered completely out before it gets so far; but as it is fairly flat it catches any rain or snow there is, and it gets a certain amount of snow and rain drainage from the rocks above, and so in between the boulders and rocks there are patches of coarse, natural grass and thorn bushes. This bit of ground

423 belongs to the Mir, and once or twice a year he sends people to
311 cut the grass, such as it is, and bring it in for his horses. It was rather a favourite walk of ours when we felt inclined for an upward scramble, for there is a fine view from it over the whole of the Aliábád Bay and the smaller Bay of Jamu, before the ground falls sheer away into the great Hasanabad gorge with the glacier at the top that waters the village of Hasanabad, our next neighbour downstream. Moreover, it is one of the rare places where, once you have got there, you can walk a little on the level, dodging about between the boulders. We were about halfway up to the Stables when Khano overtook us, desperately out of breath: "I've parked my animals in that garden over there, and I'm coming with you," he said. The "garden" was a desert of stones and rocks, with a rough, loose-stone wall about it and a few miserable stunted trees. "But we know the way quite well, thanks." "Oh no, you don't, not half so well as I do," he retorted. (This, of course, was true enough.) "I'll come with you."

857 So along he came, chattering away nineteen to the dozen, and most entertaining he was. "Do you see the Red Rock?" "There are heaps of red rocks." "Yes, but there's only the one big red boulder, that's the Red Rock. There's a cave under it where we boys shelter when it rains, and on top there are cracks in the rock that hold rain water where we can drink." Right enough, the great boulder—50 or 60 feet high, I suppose—overhung a hollow (you could hardly call it a cave) and the youngsters had built themselves a rude wall and made a very cosy nest that would hold several dozen animals. We scrambled up on to the top and found as he had said that there were several deep cracks which would evidently make neat little drinking troughs when they weren't dry. Then Khano took us round in and out of the boulders and showed us all the boys' pet places. In one they had improved a natural stone sofa and built a sheltering wall and rigged up a fireplace with a few stones, and there they cook potatoes for themselves (when they can get any). They have a very merry life out all day on the hillside in every sort of weather instead of crouching indoors over lessons. The goats climb for miles and miles,

3: Lorimer L-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1935 AV7 Burusho AV7

312
●423 And so life seems to go on. Even water rights, the turning of the carefully-husbanded water on to the land of the various groups in succession, appear to be exercised, according to the recognised scheme, by those concerned without recrimination. But at this season water is plentiful.

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584 Women here hold a position of freedom and respect rare in the East. Young and old they move freely about, unveiled and unaccompanied. They mingle and converse quite naturally and unselfconsciously with men. No doubt everyone knows everyone else and many are related. Young marriageable girls are as free and open-faced as the married women.

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123 To the stranger within their gates, at any rate to the Sāhib and Mim sāhiba, strayed out of another world, everyone is courteous and cordial, welcoming approach and questions, anxious to give information, amused at and appreciative of stumbling efforts to speak their difficult language, inviting them to their work parties in their fields or their leisure gatherings in their shady gardens. Always there is perfectly natural, self-respecting courtesy and good feeling, never that servility, false familiarity, self-assertiveness or aggressiveness characteristic of those who suffer from a sense of real or imagined inferiority.

This may appear a roseate, even idyllic picture, and no doubt there must be darker patches on the reverse side of it, but these do not appear to dim the general effect.

1914
157 So much for the Hunzukuts Burusho. Of their Nagir neighbours I can say little. In casual contacts I have found them also friendly and courteous. The general impression is that they are not so actively cheerful as the Hunzukuts.

000 We may now turn our attention to the speakers of Werchikwār (Worchikwar). That language is spoken only in the Wershigūm valley, known as the Yasin district from the name of the village adjoining the administrative headquarters. The linguistic situation existing in Yasin is shown in the following table:

601 for the Vocative, and frequently for the other cases.

000 *usko* x and *y*, cp. *iski* and *iskun*, v. §§ 187 and 206, three. With the Pn.pf., v. § 133. — *itse uusko nuyen* taking those three things. 28.18.

uskuin IUB hm (kin), H. *bərədəri*. V. *sukuin*.

usquin N., EOL, v. *sukuin*.

ustad, *ustat*, pl. *ustad(t)iŋ*, *ustatiŋ* hm craftsman, skilled craftsman; musician. — *daq stas ustad* blacksmith. *ćak stas ustad* carpenter. *but ustad ǰai.i* he is a very skilful craftsman. *Gərmahalmas juuan ustatan men ko apan* there is (lit. are) no craftsman like G. M. M. 168.13. *ustadiŋ dute . . . tamaśa śćan* bringing the musicians . . . they make an entertainment. 300.9. *da ersəśo ustatiŋ altʼambuan* then eight music-playing craftsmen, i.e. musicians, band. Son. 336.5. Prs.

ustadi craftsmanship, technical skill. — *ustadi.s ka stai.i* he has done it, made it, with skill. Prs.

uŋ y debt. — *ayste uŋ bila* debt is on me, i.e. I am in debt. *ayste uŋ dibila* debt has come on me, i.e. I have got into debt. *ja tsundo rupi.a imste uŋ bila, jaw joyas ǰai.i* he owes me five rupees, he is to pay (them) to me. *ine tsundo rupi.a jauste uŋ bila, yuyas ǰa* I owe him 5 rupees, I have to pay him. *gʼuste uŋ apiʼ ke . . .* if your father has no debts. Prov. 44. *uŋ iśi.as* the debt-giver i.e. the debtor. (-*ŋ* confirmed by IUB, cp. Sh. *uṛ*.)

● 423 *uŋaki* term applied to land given to foster-parents, or relations, for service or cash-payment. No obligation in regard to forced labour attaches

• 423 to it. Something in the nature of a fief, explained by the H. *jaɣir*. — *beruman bušai.i* 'ʷɨʌki *ičimi* he gave him some "*ušʌki*" land. 46.1. ʷɨʌki ɣenʌɣ *stum bušai* "*ušʌki*" land acquired by purchase. (< *ša*- base of °-ʷɨše.ʌs + suffix -*ki*)

601 ʷɨʌm -*rše* foster-. — ʷɨʌm *aya* (or, *a.u*) my foster-father. 28.1. ʷɨʌm *yu* his foster-father. 32.13. ʷɨʌm *mama, ačo, ayʌs* my foster-mother, brother, sister. *ine* ʷɨʌm *maper hir* that old man who had fostered (him). 26.24. ʷɨʌm *mama guyaiyʌm* I will take you as my foster-mother. 362.10. *Lʌŋa Bruṃo* ʷɨʌm *muṃimur se.ibo* L. B. says to her foster-mother. 122.1. *thʌme i*ṃ*i* (*e..i*) *inor* ʷɨʌm *yuṃi* the Tham gave out his son (daughter) to him to foster. (The exact force of ʷɨʌm here is obscure).

I also recorded ʷɨʌm -*rše* as the equivalent of "mid-wife" and "nurse", but I do not imagine that it can bear these meanings except so far as the function in question may be performed by a foster-mother.

(Form of Static Pc. of ʷɨše.ʌs).

000 ɨʌŋ IUB limbs, parts of body, H. *jor*. (Later information: °-ɨʌŋ y pl. occurs usually in the phrase °-*lčin* °-ɨʌŋ eye and limbs).

°-ʷɨše.ʌs (°-ʷɨʌi.ʌs), °-ʷɨšč-, Impv. °-ʷɨša, Ppa. n°-ʷɨʌn to rear, nurture, foster, cherish. Pn.pf. + *i*: *ovɨ-, guɨ-, yuɨ-, —; myuɨ-, —, uɨ-. — .ine ji ovɨʌmi* he reared, or fostered me. *ine uŋ guɨʌmi* he fostered you. *ine hʌɣur yuɨʌmi* he reared the horse. *ine hʌɣurše uɨʌmi* he reared the horses. *Šakanda Bahrum maperə yuɨa bʌm* the old man had fostered S. B. 22.17.

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7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza
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from India was on this religious basis.

However, records clearly indicate that Hunza had for many years enjoyed a pleasant relationship and trade with her Chinese neighbors through the Province of Singkiang. History shows that for ages the caravans moved continually from Kashgar, Urumchi and Yarkand down through Hunza and on to Gilgit, Peshawar, Afghanistan, Persia and further westward.

Hunza in those days used a lot of rice, which came from China. Wheat has practically completely replaced rice.

If this gives rise to the impression that Hunza was not as self-sufficient as you imagined, I am sorry, but I am dealing with facts and not myths . . . unless they are so identified. I don't believe nor does data prove that, while caravans moved from Turkestan through Hunza, there was any great trade or barter between the people of Hunza and Turkestan.

But because of the regular movement of these caravans across Hunza territory, it is easy to comprehend that most of the things the Hunzans would use and require would come from China and there would be a strong Chinese or Turkic influence in the area. Upon checking closely into the records and history, I found that the Chinese district bordering Hunza was also principally Mohammedan in religion as are most of the Turkic peoples. Mir Nazim Khan states clearly in his autobiography that the Mir of Hunza had possession of vast acreages in China along the Yarkand River, on which roamed herds of yaks and other domestic beasts. (It wasn't China then as they had not yet claimed it.)

The Mirs of Hunza have for many years—in fact, from time immemorial—paid tribute to the Chinese government at Kashgar. From the records that I have been able to find, they paid tribute to Kashgar long

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Water rights are regulated by law and a man can use the water from the conduit that passes his land at certain definitely established periods. The flow or shut-off is controlled by placing a large stone or rock at the opening of the channel into the individual's waterway. It may sound a bit baffling to the average individual, but upon viewing it and examining it, it is easy to understand and, what's more important, it is simple and practical.

Nowhere did I see these waterways covered or encased in pipes—although they did in many places run under the roadway.

As their water supply is glacier-fed, there is never any danger of a supply failing . . . at least, not in the imminent future. However, in cloudy periods the flow slackens and an extended cloudy period causes a severe water shortage.

Lest you get the idea that these conduits or waterways are a simple matter, I want to assure you that they are a marvel of engineering. Further, when you consider that the first one was built about 1860 without any man made tools or iron or steel, you can then believe what a difficult and gigantic undertaking it was. It is a monument to their industry, intelligence and foresight. At least now, they have iron picks with which to dig, rather than having to use ibex horns.

Here I want to mention very definitely that the same type of waterway exists on the other side of the river . . . that is, in Nagir territory.

They do not, in any sense of the word, have orchards as we know orchards in the West, because they don't have a piece of land large enough or flat enough to compare with what we know as an orchard. In the West orchard sites are usually selected with the premeditated view of providing excellent drainage. There-

them. Even apricots that were bruised, damaged or even starting to rot were put out to dry. No treatment of any kind was used . . . just simply nature at work.

An apricot tree is a most valuable asset in Hunza. It is a fact that an apricot tree is often willed to a daughter by parents and she can retain her rights to the tree and of course the crops that come from it for her lifetime.

In the Western world, the apricot is not considered a long-lived tree. In America, especially, it is considered not much longer lived than a peach or a plum and that means at the most, 25 or 30 years of life. When you take into consideration the truth that in Hunza apricot trees live to be well over 100 years, one wonders just where the difference comes in.

I really believe that I have the answer. In Hunza apricots are grown from seed. No matter where I looked or sought I could find no tree nursery in either Nagir or Hunza. (I did find a small government nursery in Gilgit.) Therefore I would assume that every Hunzan farmer grows his own trees from the planting of the apricot seeds. No doubt some Hunzan farmers are more adept at this task than others and they probably grow a few extra ones and maybe trade them for other things with their neighbors.

But, as explained, the trees here last many, many years and the orchard space or land to grow them on is very limited. Therefore, there would be little or no demand for nursery stock. I inquired wherever I went concerning grafting and I tried to establish whether or not they knew anything about the process and how much they knew, but I came up against a blank wall. I could gather no definite information. That they know how to graft and are acquainted with the process, I am sure but to what extent it is used, I could not establish.

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

Among people—yes, even experienced old-time gardeners and orchardists—there are many who believe that pollination by bees is required in all cases to set a crop of fruit. For many types of fruit and plants, this holds true; pollination by bees or other insects is essential. But in the case of the apricot and many others, wind pollination is the means that nature employs, and actually it is safer and surer than pollination by insects. Rain is also an effective pollinator, contrary to many people's conception and belief. I believe I would be safe in stating that wind pollination is the means of fertilizing more plants than can be claimed for bees and other insects combined.

All Hunzans own their own land and house. They pay no rent or taxes. Each citizen does his share of road building, taking care of the water channels and maintenance. The Mir leases his land to various individuals, most of them young people who as yet own no land of their own, or those who have insufficient for their needs. They pay him by means of services rendered and shares of the crops.

7:Tobe C, T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

roasting or broiling, in Hunza most of the foods are eaten raw or lightly cooked.

To me, at least, the reason was plain and clear . . . they have little or no fuel. Coal is unknown, wood extremely hard to get . . . they have to go a long way to find a bit of forest or woodland. I saw practically none in the Hunza area. In another area I visited—Punial—one could see a few trees and copses that represented their woodlands. But timber suitable for firewood was not within reach of the people of Hunza. The bit of wood they did get would most likely come from an apricot or other fruit tree that had outlived its usefulness.

One of the most important reasons that apricots have become such an important part in the Hunzan diet is the fact that, by having found or created early, mid-season and late varieties, the Hunzan season for apricots extends two full months. This is a most vital consideration and is well worth remembering.

The staple oil or fat of the people is apricot oil. Ghee is used regularly, but butter can only be afforded and used on special occasions.

During the entire summer seldom, if ever, is meat served or seen on an average Hunzan's table, but during the three hard winter months (December, January and February) meat or chicken is sometimes used, if available (which is seldom). Even then, it is used only by the more prosperous or wealthy people. The poorer people can't afford to kill their cattle and use them for beef except on special occasions or religious holidays.

When I say the poorer people, I should qualify this statement, for there are no class distinctions whatsoever in Hunza. However, there are those families who own but one acre of land and there are those who own 10 acres. Therefore it is to be expected that there would be a difference in their living standards.

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

him, she would at least know beforehand what she had to contend with. Then again, as the Mir performs all marriages, maybe he wouldn't allow this young man to take a second wife. I did not inquire any further into the details concerning this case, but I admit that I was somewhat surprised to think that a good healthy happy Hunzan would resort to one of civilization's favorite pastimes . . . wife-beating.

Wife-beating generally seems to be broadly practiced in Hunza. This struck me as being most strange for I could see little cause or likelihood of opportunities for misdemeanors on the part of the wife.

Upon taking the matter up with the Mir, he told me that most cases of wife-beating were brought about by nagging, and in Hunza that is sufficient justifiable cause for a man to administer a sound thrashing to his wife and she can't take him to the Mir's court about it, either. The next most frequent cause for wife-beating is over-generosity to her parents with her husband's possessions.

Wife-beating under such provocations as stated might meet with universal support and approval on the part of mankind. There may be principles and practices in Hunza that will not find widespread support in the West, but I'll bet on the basis of the two causes for wife-beating there will be broad, if not general, male approval.

By Hunza law a daughter cannot inherit property. The best that she can get in a property settlement is the use of the property for her lifetime. It then must revert to a male member of the father's family. There have been instances where a daughter has been willed an individual tree—in most cases, an apricot tree. This remains her property, or at least the crops do, for as long as the tree or she lives.